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ABSTRACT

Concern is expressed for the limited attention focused on the professional preparation of teacher educators. Notice is taken that many emerge in such roles in the absence of formal preparation. A model designed to begin the development of a program for the professional preparation of teacher educators discusses: 1) the implementation of a minor or concentration in teacher education in graduate programs, 2) advisory assistance from curriculum and instructional areas, 3) evaluation of student knowledge and performance, 4) use of existing courses and programs in the minor, and 5) field visits and experiences that would enrich the professional preparation program. (Author/CJ)

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THE PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION OF TEACHER EDUCATORS: A FOCUSED STEP

by

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A recent advising experience with a doctoral student caused me to reflect introspectively on my personal career as a teacher educator. The doctoral student in question happened to be the son of one of my former professors and subsequently a professional colleague from Auburn University who had moved from Auburn to the education deanship at Memphis State University. When Robert Saunders resigned as Associate Dean at Auburn to accept the opportunity and challenge provided by the Memphis position, a career opportunity/decision made me into a professional teacher educator almost overnight.

After graduating from Auburn, I spent an academic year as a secondary assistant principal for instruction in an urban school system, had two short associations with field-based, federal projects with curriculum development thrusts, and finally returned to Auburn as an associate with the Center for Problems Occasioned by the Desegregation of Schools. While discussing the possibility with then Dean Truman Pierce relative to my moving into his office, a position which had become available during the first quarter since my return to Auburn, the topic of professional preparation of teacher educators surfaced. Our ensuing conversation was pivoted upon the Dean's lamenting that little attention has touched on the professional preparation of teacher educators and to the systematic study of teacher education as a field

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of inquiry. Additionally, Dean Pierce verified that in actuality most educators move into teacher education through career decision/appointment approaches such as the one which had quickly emerged with little forewarning for my consideration.

Subsequently, a decision was made to accept the position of Assistant Dean for Instruction and to "become a professional teacher educator." Inevitably, time passed and more "pressing problems" interfered with a meaningful return to a focused look at the professional preparation of teacher educators which had been established as an entering mutual objective by both Dean Pierce and me.

Closely following my subsequent career decision to move to the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, I established a professional association with Dr. Abram VanderMeer, Dean Emeritus of Pennsylvania State University's College of Education and now a professor of Higher Education at the University. Several of our conversations eventually touched upon the topic of concern addressed in this article. Collectively we committed ourselves to work on the problems "in the future" inherent in the lack of focused attention to the professional preparation of teacher educators.

The future arrived for me when Dr. Saunders' son entered the University of Alabama's doctoral program in secondary education, when, in a program-planning session, he indicated that he had been encouraged by his father to build an identifiable focus both on undergraduate teacher preparation and professional teacher education into his program.

His specific request proved to be the necessary impetus for action, at least initially, at the University. It is the purpose of this article to share the ensuing developments with the professional teacher education community, as well as to generate some needed dialogue and further programmatic considerations of the professional preparation of teacher educators.

A significant number of students completing doctoral programs in the Area of Curriculum and Instruction, as well as students in other areas in the College of Education, eventually assume positions in professional teacher preparation programs in institutions of higher education. An identifiable focus of courses, specifically on teacher education as a legitimate field of inquiry, has not been operationally available in the College. Basic teacher preparation efforts in the College provide unique opportunities to involve graduate students in meaningful experiences with future teachers from the initial orientation phase, through the student teaching component, and into continuing in-service dimensions of their development. Students currently are participating in such opportunities but are not benefiting from the programmatic recognition which would be available under a more focused approach. This is perceived as being generally true across the country as people tend to become teacher educators as illustrated above by my personal example by career/appointment decisions rather than through a planned program of preparation. It was proposed that teacher education be recognized as an official minor for inclusion in Ph.D. programs or as a concentration for incorporation in Ed.D. program planning. Such a move was

seen as strengthening the preparation programs as well as the employability options of our graduates. Additionally, such a programmatic focus should also lead to a more careful study of teacher education and ultimately to the development of stronger course/application experiences for potential teacher educators.

The Curriculum and Instruction Area viewed the development of such a program focus as an extension of its program leadership responsibilities. A steering committee chaired by the Area Head of Curriculum and Instruction with a representative from each area with students who might utilize the minor/concentration was established to provide advisory assistance in its development and continuing implementation.

It is recognized that some students may desire to continue the current practice of including certain aspects of professional teacher preparation as a part of their major while others may desire to utilize the composite possibilities which would be reflected by the inclusion of a minor/concentration approach as described below. Students electing an official minor or concentration would be expected to pass a written examination which would draw heavily from the knowledge base courses as well as to demonstrate satisfactory performance in the practicum experiences. The following existing offerings drawn from five programs in the College were included as selection possibilities to meet the minimum twelve hours for students desiring to identify such a preparation focus in their doctoral programs (Table 1).

During the 1979-80 academic year, the schedule of course offerings already in place has been utilized in activating the minor/

Table 1

Minor/Concentration in Teacher Education

Program Component	Credit Hours	Course Offerings
I. Knowledge Base	6-9	AHE 675 Education for the Professions CIE 640 Curriculum/Policies in Teacher Education CIE 644 Student Teaching Supervision
*II. Performance Base	3-6	_____ Practicum in Teacher Education _____ Practicum in College Teaching
*III. Related Studies	0-3	CIE 534 Multicultural Education CIE 651 The Teacher and the Law AHE 610 Current Issues in Higher Education AHE 620 The Student in Higher Education BEF 562 Intellectual History of Higher Education BER 567 Evaluation of Educational Programs BEP 567 Evaluation of Classroom Learning or AHE 670 Measurement and Evaluation in Higher Education

*Would vary according to Area of Specialization

**The minimum requirement of twelve hours may be completed by selecting additional courses from courses such as those listed in this Related Studies category or by completing additional hours in Category I or II.

concentration. Traditionally, the student teaching supervision course has been offered during the fall semester as a means of assisting new graduate teaching assistants who are assuming those responsibilities for the first time. Dr. Ronnie Stanford, in his role as Coordinator of Undergraduate Clinical Experiences, offers the course, which has direct access to the field-based realities of this increasingly crucial element of professional teacher preparation. Currently, the focus of this course is moving toward a generic treatment of undergraduate clinical experiences with student teaching addressed as a significant component of this more global concept. A special session of Education for the Professions, a course which takes a comparative look at preparation among the professions, will be offered by Dr. VanderMeer during the spring semester for the six students who, at this time, have identified formally with the teacher education minor.

Plans have been made to offer the course, Curriculum/Policies in Teacher Education, during the three-week Interim Term between the end of the spring semester and the beginning of the first term of summer school. The flexibilities introduced by the interim block of time focus on one course, which, when merged with the Weekend College approach, initiate travel options which should enhance the possibilities that meaningful field visits might be included in the course. Toward that end, tentative plans are being developed to visit other institutions of higher education, to meet with State Department and/or Board of Regents type personnel in at least two states, as well as to visit Teacher Centers and Shared Service Centers in Alabama and Georgia. Additionally, consideration is being extended to a regular course delivery

cycle which would make these knowledge-base courses available on a summer, fall, spring/interim cycle with the Education for the Professions course, followed subsequently by the student teaching course and the curriculum/policies course.

To date, student interest in the teacher education minor/concentration has been quite strong. The six students who have moved officially to this option have come from four different programs, which may indicate that the choice has elements both of college-wide appeal and faculty-based support.

It is recognized that what has been described is merely a developmental beginning. Yet, when one allows himself to reflect upon the fact that it has taken at least twelve years to progress from the reflective concerns embedded in my earlier discussion with Dean Pierce to these beginning operational steps, one might get professionally excited about involvement in even such a small first step. Indeed, some of us at the University of Alabama have done so.

In summarizing his study of accreditation in teacher education, John Mayor (1967) wrote: "The recent study...revealed that far too many who talked about accreditation apparently had picked up what they knew about it from the 'kid' on the street." While Olsen (1979) was quoting Mayor recently in an article which belabored the lack of informed participation on the part of the teacher education profession in the crucial accreditation area, similar statements, possibly somewhat tempered, might be made relative to the larger field of teacher education as a legitimate area of intellectual inquiry. One might

conjecture that the absence of such an information/discipline-like base for the profession remains the "Achilles heel" of teacher educators. The modest proposals addressed in this article are seen as a step toward focusing upon this significant need. Obviously, the attention of this issue of the Journal of Teacher Education to the question of "What knowledge comprises the field of professional education?" also speaks directly to the larger need to legitimatize the knowledge base which supports professional education as an area of intellectual inquiry.

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